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A logistics team from the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in Al Arish airport, Egypt, organizing and preparing humanitarian aid for transport into Gaza. Photo by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society

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Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #52

27 Nov 2023

KEY POINTS

- The humanitarian pause, agreed upon by Israel and Hamas, was largely maintained on 27 November for the fourth consecutive day. It has enabled humanitarian actors, primarily the Egyptian and Palestinian Red Crescent Societies and UN agencies, to enhance the delivery of assistance into and across Gaza. To enable addressing the immense scope of needs, aid groups have called for the immediate re-opening of more crossing points, including for the entry of commercial goods.

- On 27 November, dozens of UNRWA and Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) aid trucks reached areas north of Wadi Gaza (hereafter: the north). The assistance included medical supplies, ready-to-eat food, wheat flour, bottled water, tents and blankets, which were delivered to four UNRWA shelters and three main warehouses for subsequent distribution. The aid also included small amounts of fuel delivered to water production facilities, towards their reactivation following the completion of repairs. Prior to the pause, the north had been largely inaccessible, and residents remaining there have faced a dire humanitarian situation.

- Aid distribution in areas south of Wadi Gaza (hereafter: the south), where the bulk of an estimated 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) are currently staying, also continued. UNRWA has continued distributing wheat flour to IDPs in and outside shelters. Key service providers, including hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, and IDP shelters, have continued receiving fuel on a daily basis enabling their operation.

- On 27 November, 11 Israeli hostages held in Gaza and 33 Palestinian detainees held in Israeli prisons were released. The freed hostages included two women and nine children. Among the Palestinian detainees were 30 boys and three women. Since the start of the pause, 150 Palestinians, 51 Israelis, and 18 foreign nationals have been released.

- Humanitarian partners have increased efforts to educate people about the dangers of unexploded ordnance. This includes training of trainers, holding in-person information sessions for IDPs in shelters, sharing posters and sending text messages. These actions have become more urgent with the ongoing pause, because more people are now moving through areas that might be contaminated.

- On 27 November, the UN Secretary-General called for "a full humanitarian ceasefire, for the benefit of the people of Gaza, Israel and the wider region," alongside the immediate and unconditional release of the remaining hostages. He also commended the Governments of Qatar, Egypt and the United States for facilitating the current pause, recognizing the critical role of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Hostilities and casualties (Gaza Strip)

- Since the humanitarian pause entered into force at 7:00 on 24 November, airstrikes, shelling, and ground clashes have reportedly ceased.

- According to the Government Media Office, as of 18:00 on 23 November, more than 14,800 people have been killed in Gaza, including about 6,000 children and 4,000 women. This office, which is under the de facto authorities in Gaza, has been reporting casualties since the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza stopped doing so on 11 November, following the collapse of services and communications at hospitals in the north.

- As of 18:00 on 25 November, 75 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the start of the Israeli ground operations, according to official Israeli sources.

Displacement (Gaza Strip)

- Some IDPs in the south have been trying to go back to their homes in the north, despite the Israeli forces' announcement that such movement is forbidden. On 24, 25 and 26 November, there were reports of shooting by Israeli forces towards such IDPs, resulting in several casualties.

- In recent weeks, the Israeli military have been calling and exerting pressure on residents of the north to leave southwards through a "corridor" along the main traffic artery, Salah Ad Deen Road, every day between 9:00 and 16:00. No monitoring of such movements could be conducted on 27 November, due to security restrictions imposed by the Israeli military.

- In previous days, Israeli forces had been arresting some people moving through the "corridor." IDPs interviewed by OCHA reported that Israeli forces had established an unstaffed checkpoint where people are directed from a distance to pass through two structures, where a surveillance system is thought to be installed. IDPs are ordered to show their IDs and undergo into a facial recognition scan.

- The movement of unaccompanied children and separated families has also been observed in the "corridor". Humanitarian actors are assisting these children, including through registration of cases. However, urgent measures are required to augment the presence of child protection teams in shelters; enhancing registration efficiency and addressing the specific needs of these children.

- Over 1.8 million people in Gaza, or nearly 80 per cent of the population, are estimated to be internally displaced. Of them, nearly 1.1 million IDPs are sheltering in 156 UNRWA facilities across Gaza. On 26 November, at least 13,000

additional IDPs sought refuge in UNRWA shelters in the south, presumably seeking food and services.

- About 191,000 IDPs are estimated to be in 124 public schools and hospitals, as well as in other venues such as wedding halls, offices, and community centres. The rest are sheltered by host families.

- Due to the overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions at UNRWA shelters, there have been significant increases in some communicable diseases and conditions such as diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, skin infections and hygiene-related conditions like lice.

- Concerns have been raised about vulnerable groups of people who are struggling with difficult shelter conditions. This includes people with disabilities; women who are pregnant, have recently given birth, or are breastfeeding; people who are recovering from injuries or surgeries; and those with compromised immune systems.

- Across the Gaza Strip, more than 46,000 homes have been destroyed and over 234,000 housing units have been otherwise damaged. These constitute over 60 per cent of the housing stock, as reported by the Shelter Cluster on 24 November.

Humanitarian Access (Gaza Strip)

- The total number of trucks that entered Gaza on 27 November is unclear at the time of writing as many continued to be processed during the evening hours.

- Beyond aid convoys, the Rafah crossing with Egypt also opened on 27 November for the exit of 34 wounded and sick people and 18 foreign nationals, as well as for the entry of about 300 Gaza residents who had been stranded in Egypt.

- The Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel, which prior to the hostilities was the main entry point for goods, has remained closed. On 24 November, the Protection and Shelter Clusters have called for the immediate re-opening of additional crossings, including for the entry of commercial goods.

Electricity

- Since 11 October, the Gaza Strip has been under an electricity blackout, after the Israeli authorities cut off the electricity supply, and fuel reserves for Gaza's sole power plant depleted.

Health care, including attacks (Gaza Strip)

- On 27 November, the MoH in Gaza announced that the Shifa Hospital in Gaza city has been able to reactivate its dialysis department, opening its doors to people in the north in need of such treatment. Over the weeks prior to the pause, the hospital sustained extensive damage during bombardments and Israeli operations inside the compound.

- On 26 November, a UN convoy collected 7,600 doses of vaccines for various diseases from the Ministry of Health warehouse in Gaza city and transported them to southern Gaza, where they can be refrigerated. The need for this transfer arose due to the lack of refrigeration capacity in the north. After thorough inspections to ensure their validity, the vaccines will be utilized to enhance routine immunization, which has been hampered by a shortage of supplies and ongoing hostilities.

- Kamal Adwan hospital in Jabalia, one of the five hospitals partially operational in the north, urgently requires supplies and medical staff in the fields of obstetrics, paediatrics, neonatology, surgery, and orthopaedics. Eighty of its patients require immediate transfer to a better-equipped facility in the south for their survival. Evacuations from this and other hospitals are planned for the coming days, provided that the pause is extended.

Water and sanitation (Gaza Strip)

- On 26 November, technicians visited water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in the north, carrying out an initial assessment of the damage sustained, and the repairs needed to reactivate them.

- On 27 November, UNRWA continued delivering fuel to the Gaza's main water utility, which in turn distributed it to water and sanitation facilities in the south: two seawater desalination plants, 79 water wells, 15 water pumping stations, 18 sewage pumping stations, and one wastewater treatment plant. Supply of potable water in the south via two pipelines coming from Israel has continued.

- Delivery of bottled water reached IDP shelters in the north on 26 and 27 November. However, addressing people's water needs sustainably requires the reactivation of the water desalination plant and the water wells, which in turn depends on the conduct of repairs and the availability of fuel. Concerns about dehydration and waterborne diseases persist due to water consumption from unsafe sources.

- In the south, UNRWA continues to operate eight water wells that provide potable and domestic water to IDP shelters, alongside water trucking operations.

- Solid waste collection from the camps, and emergency shelters and transfer to landfills continues in the south. About 50 truckloads were transferred to temporary dumping sites on 26 November.

Food security

- UNRWA distribution of flour outside of shelters continued on 26 and 27 November in the south, alongside small deliveries of flour to shelters in Jabalia, in the north. The latter were carried out as part of authorized convoys during the ongoing humanitarian pause.

- Cooking gas continued entering Gaza for the fourth consecutive day, at a pace of about 85 tons per day, well below people's needs. Queues at a filling station in Khan Younis have reportedly extended for about 2 kilometres, with people waiting at them overnight. Meanwhile, reports indicate that people are burning doors and window frames to cook.

- Since 25 November, one WFP bakery has resumed operations on an ad-hoc basis allowing the provision of bread to about 90,000 people in UN shelters in the south.

- In the north, livestock is facing starvation and the risk of death due to shortage of fodder and water. Crops are being increasingly abandoned and damaged due to lack of fuel required to pump irrigation water. Across Gaza, farmers have been slaughtering their animals due to the immediate need for food and the lack of fodder to keep them alive. This practice poses an additional threat to food security as it leads to the depletion of productive assets.

Hostilities and casualties (Israel)

- On 27 November, for the fourth consecutive day, no rocket fire from Gaza towards Israel was reported. In total, over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed in Israel, according to the Israeli authorities, the vast majority on 7 October. As of 20 November, the names of most of these fatalities have been released, including 859 civilians. Of those whose ages have been provided, 33 are children.

- Following the release of 50 hostages since 24 November, 167 people remain captive in Gaza, including Israelis and foreign nationals, according to the Israeli authorities. Before the pause, four civilian hostages had been released by Hamas, one Israeli soldier had been rescued by Israeli forces, and three bodies of hostages had reportedly been retrieved by Israeli forces.

Violence and casualties (West Bank)

- No new fatalities were reported in the West Bank since 26 November afternoon.

- Between 7 October and 27 November, 231 Palestinians, including 59 children were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Of those killed, 222 were killed by Israeli forces, eight by Israeli settlers and one either by forces or settlers. The seven-week toll represents more than half of all Palestinians killed in the West Bank this year. So far, 2023 has been the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since OCHA began recording casualties in 2005.

- More than 67 per cent of the fatalities since 7 October have occurred during search-and-arrest operations and other operations carried out by Israeli forces, including some – mainly in Jenin and Tulkarm governorates – involving exchange of fire with Palestinians. More than half of the fatalities were reported in operations that did not involve armed clashes.

- Between 24 and 26 November, Israeli forces injured 158 Palestinians, including 124 children, during confrontations near the Israeli prison of Ofer, in anticipation of the release of Palestinian detainees as part of the humanitarian pause agreement. Family members of the detainees to be released were reportedly pressured by the Israeli authorities to sign a commitment with several restrictions regarding celebrations, gathering and, in some cases, their homes were searched.

- Since 7 October, Israeli forces have injured 3,093 Palestinians, including at least 496 children, over half of them in the context of demonstrations. An additional 73 Palestinians have been injured by settlers and 18 others either by forces or settlers. Some 33 per cent of those injuries have been caused by live ammunition, compared to a monthly average of nine per cent of live ammunition injuries in the West Bank in the first nine months of 2023.

- OCHA verified two settler attacks that took place on 25 and 26 November and resulted in damage to Palestinian owned property. According to Palestinian eyewitnesses, a group of Israeli settlers vandalized 300 olive trees and stole agricultural equipment on the outskirt of Al Khadr (Bethlehem) and Bani Naim (Hebron) villages.

- Since 7 October, OCHA has recorded 287 settler attacks against Palestinians, resulting in Palestinian casualties (33 incidents), damage to Palestinian-owned property (215 incidents), or both casualties and damage to property (39 incidents). This reflects a daily average of almost six incidents, compared with three since the beginning of the year. One-third of these incidents included threats with firearms, including shootings. In nearly half of all incidents, Israeli forces were either accompanying or actively supporting the attackers.

Displacement (West Bank)

- Since 7 October, at least 143 Palestinian households comprising 1,014 people, including 388 children, have been displaced amid settler violence and access restrictions. The displaced households are from 15 herding/Bedouin communities.

- Additionally, 181 Palestinians, including 93 children, have been displaced since 7 October following demolitions in Area C and East Jerusalem, due to lack of permits; and 54 Palestinians, including 25 children, have been displaced following punitive demolitions.

Funding

- As of 27 November, Member States have disbursed US$259.1 million against the updated Flash Appeal launched by the UN and its partners to implement its response plan in support of 2.2 million people in the Gaza Strip and 500,000 in the West Bank. This constitutes about 21 per cent of the $1.2 billion requested. An additional $250 million has been pledged by 23 November. Private donations are collected through the Humanitarian Fund.

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND RESPONSES: 20-26 November

Health

During the reporting period, Cluster partners have delivered the following items across Gaza:

- Various medical supplies to six hospitals and the ambulances;
- The Interagency Emergency Health Kit (IEHK) assistive to 212 people;
- 15 Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) community kit and 50 midwaifery kit and 15 obstetric surgical kit; 16 Inter-Agency Emergency Health Kits (IARH)
- 72 rehabilitation and nursing sessions, and 3,177 post-natal care consultations.
- 900 family hygiene kits distributed in one IDP shelter in An-Nusseirat and 120 host community shelters;
- 1,070 dignity kits to women staying in IDP shelters.

During the same period, there have been an average of 30,000 primary healthcare consultations per day through fixed and mobile clinic services; 10,156 children were vaccinated after this service resumed in November. Mental health and psychosocial services are being provided by partners, mainly in shelters to 20,000.

An Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Coordination Cell is now operational in Cairo and will soon be active in Gaza. The strategy involves providing a surge in supplies, infrastructure, and staffing to support existing health facilities. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) surge teams are already on the ground, offering healthcare services. The Jordanian field hospital is being set up, and 31 teams are ready to deploy with support from WHO.

Main factors that have been impeding operations include limited access to the north; shortage of fuel, medical supplies, water, food, and other essential supplies; displacement of partners, their staff and families; and overcrowding in IDP shelters. NGO partners have experienced difficulties with their logistics capacity in Egypt. So far, only 19 per cent of the funding required to respond has been committed.

Protection

Mine risk education remains a top priority right now in protection for people in Gaza. Despite challenges, during the reporting period, 21 Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) focal points were deployed in 11 UNRWA shelters in the south benefiting 4,768 people. The UN Mine Action Service is planning to send 1 million people EORE messages. Planning for the expansion of risk education outreach in non-UNRWA shelters is underway. One of the biggest challenges is reaching everyone in Gaza, both physically reaching them particularly in the north, in non UNRWA locations as well as challenges with patchy communication and electricity shortages.

A registration tool for unaccompanied and separated children is ongoing. Temporary care arrangements are being confirmed as well as coordination with Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) and WHO on children who are evacuated for medical reasons. Child protection actors in Gaza are being identified and mapping of available services is ongoing. Access challenges, including fuel shortages, and limited children related supplies in Gaza such as suitable winter clothes, recreational kits and activities continue to affect the scale of immediate child protection responses. Important also is identifying/mapping available child protection actors and services

Providing crucial support for women and girls involves addressing the depletion of local hygiene supplies, particularly dignity and menstrual hygiene kits. Despite efforts to procure these supplies, the demand exceeds the available resources, necessitating increased supplies, improved access, and additional funding. Ensuring the safety of women in shelters is paramount, prompting the GBV sub-cluster to develop an observation tool. A team of volunteers will collect observations in nearby sites, contributing valuable information on gender-related issues and needs. Challenges include reaching GBV partners, comprehensive mapping of services, and the significant impact on GBV services. Out of over 20 partners, only nine were reached, and six can assist with voluntary observational work. Re-establishing referral pathways for survivors, crucial in GBV response, requires rebuilding and coordination with UNRWA is deemed essential.

Beyond mine risk efforts, disability and inclusion initiatives concentrate on psychosocial support (PSS) recreational activities in UNRWA southern shelters. In the past week, 46 sessions were conducted across 46 shelters, benefitting 10,649 children and 316 adults (parents and caregivers participating in the activities with their children). Additionally, 108 assistive devices were distributed. More supplies, including assistive devices, hygiene kits, and wound dressing kits, are expected to arrive in Gaza in the coming days. Ongoing challenges and constraints hampering the much-needed scale-up of response efforts include insufficient fuel for movements and communication issues.

Despite extreme overcrowding at shelters, UNRWA has been able to provide some recreational activities, PSS support, and mine risk awareness sessions. They have also conducted child protection assessments and been assessing how to implement activities with children and young adults and scale up these activities across all their shelters.

Food security

Since November 24th, WFP has supported 121,161 people in shelters and host communities by distributing bread, food parcels, and e-vouchers. Additionally, one WFP bakery operates ad-hoc, reaching approximately 90,000 people in shelters with bread on Fridays.

On November 26, UNRWA extended its flour distribution to areas outside shelters in the southern governorates, reaching 20,720 families thus far.

During the current humanitarian pause, the prioritised flour distribution continued in the North and Gaza City as part of ongoing humanitarian convoys in the North of Wadi Gaza.

On November 26, at UNRWA shelters in Jabalia in the north, approximately 7.6 metric tons of high-energy biscuits provided by the World Food Programme (WFP), were distributed as ready-to-eat food. This allocation is sufficient to meet the minimal daily food intake for 23,616 people for one day.

Partners are encountering difficulties in operating, given the situation on the ground. Despite the 4-day truce, they reported difficulties in fueling their vehicles to implement/monitor the food assistance.

- Anera, PARC, together with United Palestinian Appeal, Taawon, and Middle East Children Alliance, covered around 55,000 people with food parcels in host communities this week.
- ACF targeted host families by giving fresh vegetable parcels to 3,200 people to host families.
- OXFAM distributed 1000 Food parcels to IDPs in non-UN shelters in Rafah and Khan Younis and reached 1133 families in Rafah and Khan Younis with food vouchers.
- Beit Lahia Development Association distributed bread for host families, targeting around 6,000 beneficiaries.
- Other partners are mobilizing resources in the coming days, targeting the three governorates of the Middle Area, Khan Younis and Rafah.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)

During the reporting period, including since the humanitarian pause, Shelter Cluster partners conducted field assessments at numerous collective centres and makeshift shelters in the south, revealing a shortage of basic bedding sets (mattresses and blankets) for the majority of IDPs. There is also an urgent need for firewood as an alternative fuel source for preparing food due to a lack of other options.

Due to limited supplies, cluster partners coverage of Shelter and NFIs needs not more than 3 per cent of needs, and not more than 17 per cent if the items in the pipeline that have not arrived are considered.

Severe shortages in shelter winterization materials and essential NFIs persist, including sealing off kits for damaged houses and creating additional living spaces; there is a significant lack of bedding sets, including mattresses and blankets, to meet the needs of IDPs in various settings.

Education

Since 7 October, nine Education Cluster partners have reached 50,726 students and teachers. The main deliverables included emergency learning and recreational supplies (26,833 people reached), psychosocial support (31,318 reached), and recreational activities (49,726 reached). The response has been focusing on Khan Younis, Rafah, and Middle governorates, as North Gaza and Gaza governorates are inaccessible.

Multi-Purpose Cash assistance (MPCA)

Since the beginning of the hostilities, 66,870 households (including roughly 449,000 people) were delivered Emergency MPCA. Cash out rates across the response stand at 70-75 per cent but have been declining slightly over the past few days. While distribution is delivered across the Gaza strip, the vast majority is now concentrated in the south.

Formal market actors, such as supermarkets and retailers are largely depleted and facing major challenges in re-stocking and operating; however, informal markets, such as vendors, minimarts, carts and stalls, reportedly turned into the main source for goods. Information is still unclear on whether shops and markets actors were able to restock during the pause.

Post distribution monitoring data from recipients of cash assistance point to food, water, medicines, hygiene products, and clothing as the top expenditures reported. About 81 per cent of respondents reported that unrestricted cash helped them accessing needed goods and services, either fully or partially. Over 95 per cent reported unrestricted cash as their preference for future assistance.

Logistics

The Logistics Cluster developed and disseminated a new online reporting form to collect information regarding incoming supplies as well as the current stock levels in Egypt and other countries. The form was shared with 34 organisations that are part of the Logistics Cluster and other Clusters and is an ongoing project to be updated on a weekly basis.

On 22 November, 21 mobile storage units (MSUs) arrived in Al Arish, Egypt. The MSUs will be installed, in Egypt to augment the Egyptian Red Crescent’s (ERC) warehousing capacity, and 11 will be delivered to Gaza to expand the storage capacity in key locations. An additional three MSUs were already delivered to Gaza and are in the process of being installed. The latter MSUs will provide an additional 960 m2 of storage capacity. To further support partners inside Gaza, an International NGO will support with providing access to their storage capacity through the Logistics Cluster to receive I/NGOs’ cargo on behalf of the wider humanitarian community.

Emergency Telecommunications

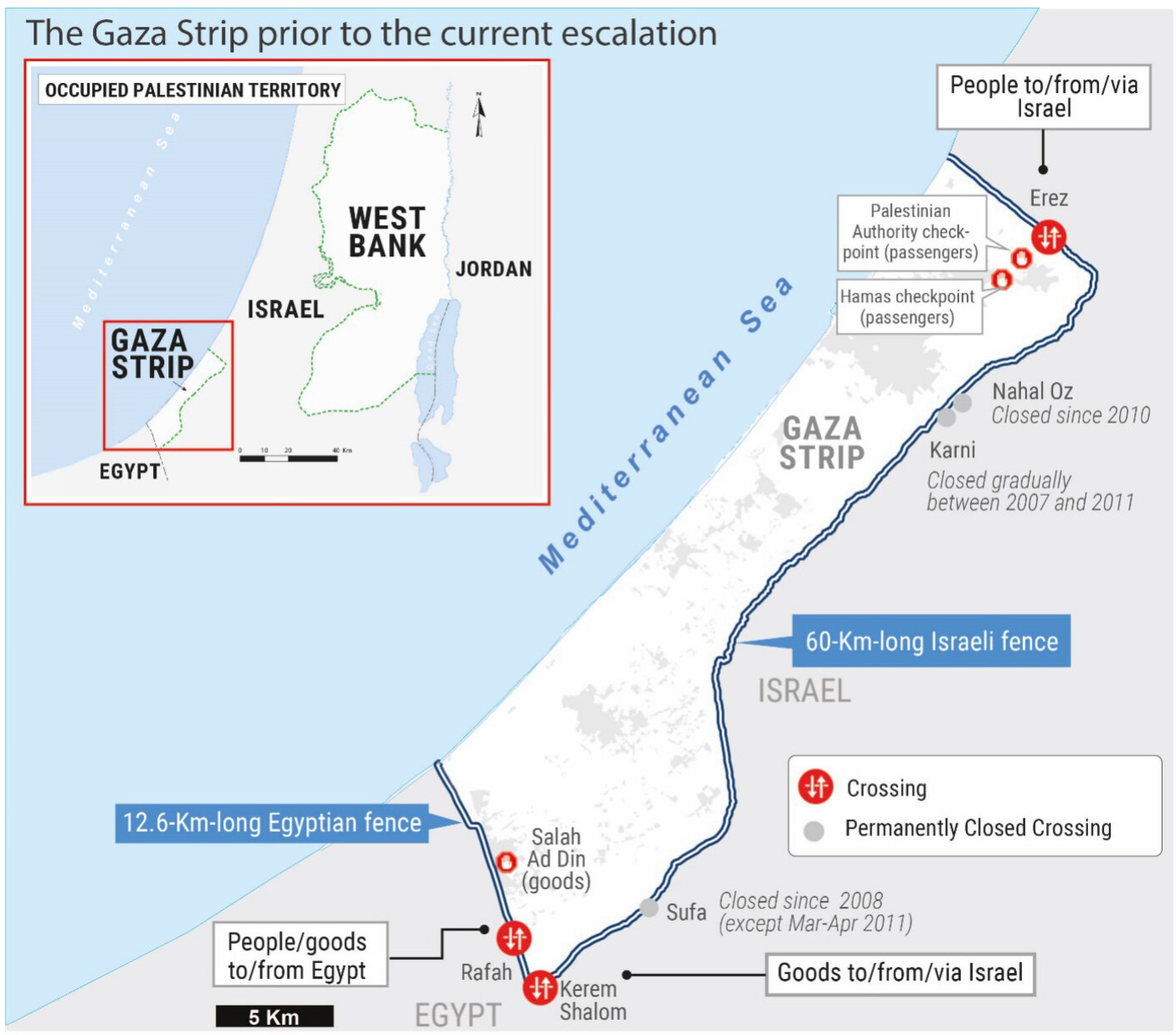
The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) coordination team continues to engage all parties — the Egyptian Red Crescent, OCHA, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and the Egyptian authorities — to fast-track the importation process of telecommunications equipment through either Egypt or Israel into Gaza. Liaison with OCHA continues the importation of equipment into Gaza via Israel. To coordinate a collective approach among partners for the importation of equipment, 11 partners have submitted their ICT equipment needs through a survey which is currently ongoing. The ETC urgently requires an initial US$250,000 out of the total requested US$800,000 in the Flash Appeal to continue its ongoing activities and address the immediate needs in Gaza.

Reliable communications networks are needed to enable humanitarians to stay connected in high-risk situations, restore security communications networks for UN staff, and coordinate response activities.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Not available

Protection against sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA) remains a cross-cutting priority for all clusters. The SAWA helpline, reachable at 121 and through WhatsApp at +972 59-4040121 (East Jerusalem at 1-800-500-121), operates 24/7. This toll-free number is widely disseminated across all areas of intervention to report cases of SEA and to facilitate emergency counselling and referrals for affected communities to access life-saving services. The PSEA Network monitors calls daily and will increase the number of counsellors if necessary.



* Asterisks indicate that a figure, sentence, or section has been rectified, added, or retracted after the initial publication of this update.